

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Naoto Kan of Japan in Deauville, France

May 26, 2011

President Obama. I just want to very briefly say how glad I am to have an opportunity to discuss important issues with Prime Minister Kan once again. As I've said so often, we have one of the strongest alliances that has made both the United States and Japan safer and more prosperous for half a century now.

And obviously, all of us were heartbroken by the extraordinary devastation that took place recently as a consequence of the tsunami and the earthquake and the nuclear crisis in Japan. I repeatedly expressed to Prime Minister Kan that the U.S. will stand by Japan for as long as it takes to help recover. And we are confident that Japan will emerge from these difficult times stronger than ever.

In the meantime, we're going to continue to work together on a whole range of international and bilateral issues. Japan has been a huge contributor to our efforts to deal with Afghanistan, to increase development there. They have been a strong supporter and contributor to Pakistan and its efforts to improve government services in that country and development in that country.

We've worked together on issues like Iran sanctions. We've worked together on a range of international development opportunities. And obviously, we continue to work together very closely in terms of security in East Asia, whether that's issues of how North Korea operates and making sure that they actually implement a denuclearization process or thinking about the long-term security structures in East Asia.

We've also had the opportunity to work together closely on trade issues, and we're both committed to making sure we're continually expanding opportunities for trade and commerce in the Asia-Pacific region.

So we have no better friend than the Japanese people. We are deeply respectful of the outstanding leadership that Prime Minister Kan has provided during a time of great crisis in his country. And we want to emphasize to the Japanese people that we will be with them throughout the rebuilding process and are very confident that Japan will continue its role as a global leader.

[At this point, President Obama's remarks were translated into Japanese by an interpreter.]

President Obama. Let me apologize to the translator for not breaking that up into its component parts. *[Laughter]*

Prime Minister Kan. This is the first opportunity to meet President Obama after the earthquake disaster, and I would like to reiterate my sincere gratitude for the United States and its support. And right after the disaster of the earthquake, we received a call from President, and since then, we have three times had a telephone conversation. Right after the disaster, the United States sent an aircraft carrier, the *Ronald Reagan*, for its activity—the U.S. and Japan's activity under Operation Tomodachi.

And as for the nuclear reactor accident, the United States provided us with the human resources and experts and also the equipment without hesitation. And through this series of actions shown by the United States, and particularly President Obama, Japan—we are—we fully and deeply recognize the depth of the *kizuna*, or the bonds of friendship, between Japan and the United States. And Japanese people are deeply grateful for what the United States has done.

As to the assistance provided from the United States, I will—Japan will definitely recover and reconstruct itself so that we will be participating, together with the United States, in various agenda in the global fora, and we would like to further increase our capability to do so, and I'm sure that we can do that.

Even since before the earthquake and the disaster, we have been working on the rebirth of Japanese economy and fiscal conservation and reform in Japan's social security and those various challenges. And the work on those agenda came to a halt right after the earthquake. But along with our efforts on reconstruction from the disaster, we will be working on those challenges which have been pointed out even since before the earthquake. And we are—*[inaudible]*.

Japan has been planning its policy of the third opening of Japan after the first Meiji Restoration and the era right after the Pacific war. And the third opening was to open this country again to the world by proactively working on its economic and trade liberalization and deepening its ties with the world. And we will be working hard again on these issues.

And in our efforts to liberalize this trade liberalization, there is this issue of TPP, and our original intention was to make a decision whether we—on the negotiations of the TP—our stance on the negotiations on the TPP in June. And that has been our policy, but there has been a delay in the schedule because of the disaster. But I would like to make the policy in the near future—not so late in the near future.

And we are fully aware of the various issues in the world such as the Middle East and North Africa and Iran and Syria and Afghanistan and Pakistan. And Japan will continue to pursue our efforts in those areas, including in our assistance to Afghanistan and Pakistan. And where we can, we will provide assistance and work—we would like to work together with the United States on these issues.

And of course, we will be working together on the issue—the situation in East Asia, which deeply relates to the security of Japan. And we have the issue of North Korea and its nuclear development, and how to stop their nuclear development is an issue, is a challenge. And also we have this issue of abduction by North Korea, and we are—we will continue to pursue its resolution with the assistance of the United States. And we will also work to ensure the denuclearization of North Korea.

In any case, we will first work on the reconstruction of the Japanese economy so that it will be revitalized again and enable us to make efforts on these issues in a proactive manner. And we have been receiving a lot of assistance from the United States, and we will continue to ask for your cooperation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:12 p.m. at the Royal Barriere hotel. Prime Minister Kan spoke in Japanese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Japan, Prime Minister Kan.

Locations: Deauville, France.

Names: Kan, Naoto.

Subjects: France : President Obama's visit; Iran : U.N. Security Council sanctions; Japan : Afghanistan, role; Japan : Earthquake and tsunami, damage and recovery efforts; Japan : Nuclear power plants in Fukushima; Japan : Pakistan, role; Japan : Prime Minister; Japan : Relations with U.S.; Japan : Security cooperation with U.S.; Japan : Trade with U.S.; Natural disasters : Japan, earthquake and tsunami; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Pakistan : Governmental accountability and transparency, strengthening efforts.

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